

**Notes/Questions from Budget Community Meeting  
March 31, 2010  
6 p.m. Taube Room, Belmont Library  
And Other Community Submitted Comments**

(R)=Belmont Resident/ (B)=Belmont Business Owner

**Questions from flip charts:**

1. (R) Value of 1870 Art Center to community
  - a. Fields, art, playground, community center, classes
2. (B) What is the rent that the Belmont Historical Society pays?  
*The City rents the Manor Building to the Peninsula Museum of Art, which subleases to others. /*
3. (R) Waterdog Lake
  - a. Encourage Art Center activities, marketing, offer additional services, grants from businesses
4. (R) Art Studio Pricing – make it different for non-residents
5. (R) Don't change the maintenance at the Library
6. (R) Study rent rates – comparison of space worth
7. (R) Barrett – don't remove from communities benefit
8. (R) Traffic concerns on Ralston if Barrett's use changes
9. (R) Raising rents – loss of artists??
10. (R) Other activities at Barrett?
11. (R) Tie into Vision Statement
12. (R) Vacant apartments at South and Ralston; renovate and rent out?
13. (R) Salary costs, reductions, days off
14. (R) Parks and Rec revenue proposals – ratio between art studios and other fees
15. (R) Impact of cuts on valued items – i.e. streets
16. (R) Concern over adding taxes for special items
17. (R) Fire: Impact of San Carlos leaving partnership

**Additional Notes:**

1. Approximately 67 people were in attendance
2. Introduction by Don Mattei, Acting City Manager
3. PowerPoint presentation by Thomas Fil, Finance Director
4. Other questions/comments that were responded to at the meeting:
  - a. What about the State and Prop 1A? Local taxpayer propositions?
  - b. Explain 2010 and 2011 columns
  - c. City Manager salary, short-term strategy to capture savings
  - d. 1870 value to community
  - e. (R) Asked for a comparison of Manor and Barrett (rents/building/facility); Jonathan asked the community: "What level of support does the community want to provide to the Manor House and Barrett?"
  - f. (B) 1870 Art Center – What is on the block? Field/center? It is very valuable to the community
  - g. (R) 1870 asset to the community – "We need them more than they need us" – during a crisis, think outside the box – revenue "is there a way to grow additional services to bring revenue" i.e. grants from Oracle for using our roads; recommended getting advice from someone in marketing.
  - h. (R) Rent at 1870 raised this year, no water (rusty), no heat – don't consider it as if it were a fully-equipped building – not reasonable
  - i. (R) Many years ago there was a possibility of putting condos on the Barrett site... that did not happen. Barrett caters to all of the community. It may be a revenue loss, don't remove from the community.
  - j. (R) She turns left onto Ralston every morning, and it takes her longer to turn left than to commute to RWC where she works. If you add additional use to Barrett, it will add traffic.
  - k. (Don Mattei commented that we are not getting rid of Barrett... we are only talking about rent issues.)
  - l. (R) If rent is raised, you may lose some artists – both locations are a draw to people of the City
  - m. (R) Does Barrett have something for teens? What other activities occur at Barrett?
  - n. (R) Will you be going into detail with rent amounts? (Current rent/proposed rent)

- o. (R) Can we use the money from the Bicycle Bridge to pay for operating deficit?
- p. (R) There are potholes on our street – if you cut the budget, please be careful – we may lose benefits; without nice looking streets, home prices go down.
- q. (R) Consider a voter parcel tax?
- r. (R) Why aren't property taxes covering everything? Artists vs. Increased taxes... I understand the dilemma – but if taxes are raised, you will have a “taxpayer revolt”
- s. (R) Why is Fire not included in the numbers? (Fire is paid through the Belmont Fire Protection District, and a separate entity.)
- t. (R) If San Carlos leaves Belmont-San Carlos Fire, will it be a disaster for Belmont?

The Mayor thanked everyone for coming.  
Meeting was concluded at 7:40 p.m.

#### Other Community Submitted Comments

1. When and how is Belmont going to make city salaries, particularly pension benefits, affordable to operate the city? At the going rate, cities will bankrupt themselves with extraordinarily high benefits which are inconsistent with salaries/pensions that residents earn. I think it is inappropriate that police can retire in early fifties at nearly full salary. What is the average amount of overtime salary that police/fireman earn? Government employee salaries/benefits are a ticking time bomb that need to be addressed now.
2. Haven't enough Belmont landmarks been tossed aside in favor of the almighty dollar. I'm sure there's more money in razing the Cultural Center and sending Ruth Waters and her wonderful volunteers packing!

Please don't tell us that the decision will come down to Belmont arts vs. another parking lot!

3. I urge you not to go forward with plans to rent the Barrett facility in Belmont to a Private School. I am a long time supporter of the Belmont Community Players and have concerns about the City of Belmont turning their back on a special attraction as the annual melodrama show. This is a unique form of entertainment not found elsewhere on the peninsula. I know of people who travel from Livermore, Tracy, Danville and San Jose to see the show. While they are here they spend time in Belmont and support the local businesses. Please keep a special tradition in Belmont alive, and keep the audience for these shows coming to help support the local businesses.

4. Thanks to you and Mr. Fil and everyone else for the community budget meeting last night. I've lived in Belmont for going on 13 years and appreciate such opportunities. I wish it had been a little more specifically productive, though. People like to put in their plugs for things they don't want cut, and I don't blame them, but perhaps a good exercise for everyone who wants to avoid \$X of cuts somewhere is to ask them to also suggest where they want the \$X to be cut instead, or how they propose generating a counteracting \$X in revenues. Because of course at the end of all this, the budget has to balance, and that would be a good way to bring that point home. Also, for suggestions that some things give Belmont enough value that they should be spared from being cut regardless of whether they pay for themselves (I recall this being said of the Barrett Arts Center, and theoretically I agree), I wonder if there is some effective or feasible way to try and put a dollar value on them. Sure, it's a subjective exercise and there'd be a lot of hand-waving, but essentially that's what has to be done to justify anything that doesn't pay its way. That may be worth some brainstorming somewhere along the way.